

# Line in the Sand

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Summary: Standing over Flowey, covered in dust, Chara realizes that there's some lines she won't cross after all. The only question is what to do about it. Time to reset. Genocide-route AU.

## 1. Chapter 1

"After all it's me your best friend! I'm helpful, I can be useful to you. I promise I won't get in your way. I can help...I can...I can...Please don't kill me."

Chara honestly didn't know what expression was gracing her face right then.

Probably nothing good if the reactions of everyone else was any indication.

It didn't feel real. The features were close but still off when she had looked in the mirror earlier. It had been impossible to focus.

Flowey had been following her every step of the way, telling her everything that had happened. Telling her all the ways she had taken this bright, shining prince and destroyed him. Oh, he hadn't phrased it that way. He didn't even seem to see it that way. But facts were facts and Asriel Dreemurr (his whole family, this whole kingdom) would objectively be better off if he'd never met her.

Not that he'd said that was who he was in so many words. But he had called her Chara long before she knew that name and he said she was the only one who understood him. He even spoke of friendship. And then he told her his story. She hadn't known what to say. Apologies felt foreign on her tongue and he rejected any attempts at pity. Not that she had much pity to spare.

So she hadn't said anything. So he had kept on talking, seeming

almost happy for a being who claimed to be incapable of positive feelings.

He had committed \_suicide\_. Asriel, who had given her everything he had, had had her take everything from him in turn. He had destroyed himself but had stuck around out of fear of what came next. And it was a fair question. What would happen when a soulless being passed on? What had happened to Asriel's soul?

And then, when he was talking about how they were perfect for each other because they wouldn't hesitate to kill the other if they got in each other's way, he had abruptly grown terrified of her and fled. Fled right to daddy after all of his earlier contempt.

And Asgore didn't even know, was the worst part. Asriel had come to him, Asriel was scared, Asriel was \_crying\_ and Asgore had known she was the one who he had warned him of. And she had seen Asgore stab himself because it was what Asriel would have wanted. And she had seen Asgore bow his head and talk of how he just wanted to see Toriel and Asriel again. And Asgore had offered her a cup of tea.

And Chara had stabbed him.

And Flowey had killed him, the father he'd futilely gone to for protection. And he was babbling something inane about how he hadn't betrayed her and he could be useful. And she hadn't even known a flower could look so terrified. And his face and voice were Asriel's again and she couldn't even muster any anger at this blatant manipulation because he was genuinely in terror for his life. Genuinely in terror of \_her\_.

She still hadn't said anything since she had come here, she didn't think. Still hadn't said a word since she'd killed Sans.

He was still watching her and begging for his life and she justâ€¦she had to say something. Her silence was probably making the situation worse. Why had he gotten upset? Because he had messed up her plan all those years ago? She wasn't so far gone she didn't realize he'd suffered far more than she. She wouldn't be the one to blame him for humanity's sins. She had to say something.

But then she'd have to face this. Then she'd have to hear why he'd ever thought that in the first place. And he was begging her with Asriel's face and Asriel's voice and the only time he had ever begged her for anything was when he had begged her to stop when her body had started failing.

She hadn't listened then.

Strangely, her lack of action â€" even violence â€" seemed to be unsettling Flowey further. The shivering looked almost painful.

She couldn't be here.

She went back to the beginning. She saw no one before Toriel found her. She didn't have time to waste on this. She knew Toriel meant enough to Sans he didn't step in to try and stop Chara until long after she had killed Papyrus. She needed advice and Toriel gave her a teary-eyed hug before sending her on her way.

She played along with Papyrus' puzzle and his attempts to capture her. She'd even gone on a playdate with him and didn't object when he merrily accused her of being obsessed with him.

Then she had burgers with Sans.

"I think I need to reevaluate my life and my choices," she said bluntly.

"Hm? That sounds heavy," he replied. "Why come to me?"

"Because you're one of only two people I've met who would have any idea what I'm talking about and I cannot have this conversation with the other one."

"Thisâ€¦isn't going to be a fun conversation, is it?"

"Probably not," Chara agreed. "But I didn't even kill your brother so you could at least humor me."

He narrowed his eyes. "Am I supposed to thank you for not murdering the best damn person you've ever met?"

"Well it would be nice."

"I'm not going to do that," Sans said. "Unless you would go out and do it if I don't."

Chara laughed. "Not today, Sans. But it's been awhile since I haven't is what I'm saying. I forgot how much I hate having to solve puzzles. Which is kind of strange, really, as I don't mind puzzle-solving in general. I just hate being made to do it."

Sans fixed her with a steady stare. "So we're talking about your being a time anomaly."

She shrugged. "If that's what you want to call it. My habit of starting from scratch and creating a save point in case I get careless."

"And how exactly do you define 'careless'?"

She smiled. "Oh, but that is a good question."

"Is it one you intend to answer?" he asked.

Chara shrugged. "It varies, really. Anything that doesn't work out the way I want it to. I saved right before coming in here with you."

"Should I be flattered?"

"I wouldn't be," Chara said. "I didn't want to have to go back all the way to the beginning in case you decided to do something stupid."

Sans leaned forward. "And just what 'stupid' thing do you think I would do?"

"I haven't killed Papyrus," she repeated. "I'm about ninety percent

sure I haven't killed anyone this round."

"Only ninety percent?"

She shrugged. "These things all blend together. Who even knows? I know I didn't kill anyone important, at least. No boss monsters."

"So what are you so concerned I'd do?"

"I came here because I need advice. I don't want to have to deal with you overreacting and trying to kill me," Chara said.

"And why would you think I would try to kill you?"

"Well you told me that Toriel asking you not to is the only reason you haven't already tried," Chara explained. "And I don't think I even killed all that many people that first time. Definitely not anybody who didn't attack me first and, I don't care what anyone says, there's nothing 'morally suspect' about self-defense."

"I'd take that a little bit more seriously if you hadn't admitted you've killed Papyrus," Sans said flatly.

Chara scowled. "Oh, you always get so caught up in that! What's it matter? He's fine now."

"But he wasn't always," Sans said, looking a little distant. "And even if I can't quite remember it, it's quite the event, losing your only brother."

"Yeah, I've been there."

"Have I tried to kill you before?"

"Tried?" Chara repeated. "You've succeeded and more times than I'm comfortable with. Especially in the beginning. I usually win these days but you're still a pain in the ass to fight. And I'm not here today out of boredom so trying to drive me into giving up won't work. And there's another reason you shouldn't waste both our times with that."

"You haven't killed Papyrus, you said."

"Well, that's true. In the next run you can't guarantee I won't, especially if you piss me off here," she agreed. "Though if I want to try and talk with you again I really shouldn't waste time with that."

"And why shouldn't I?" Sans asked. "Why should I humor you and even try to help you when you care nothing for senselessly slaughtering me and my brother and everyone I've ever known again and again and again?"

"Because it's not like playing out this same old dance, this same old fight, is going to cause anything new to happen," she explained.

"There's nothing new under the sun," Sans said cynically.

"That would be new," she countered, "being under the sun."

"And, what? I suppose you've come up with a plan to free us all?" he asked rhetorically.

"Not so much. But I did tell you I'm here to reevaluate my life and my choices," Chara said.

"Alright, I'll bite," Sans said. "I don't promise more than that. I may not be able to stop you, I may have promised Toriel, my brother may be still be living, but I refuse to commit to aiding our would-be destroyer."

"That does seem fair."

"What kind of choices are you looking to reevaluate since your habit of murdering everyone doesn't seem to be getting you down?"

"Do you know Flowey?" she asked.

Sans paused. "Not by name though I assume you must mean that tiny talking flower."

"Probably. How many can there possibly be?"

"I seem to recall he's tried to kill me quite a lot," Sans said. "I seem to recall he's done the same sorts of things you've done."

"But what do you know about him? What do you know about me?"

"He doesn't have a soul," Sans replied. "He was a flower injected with determination. He didn't quite come out right. I'd say the two of you have quite a bit in common. Never treating things with the severity they deserve though you still have a soul. Not that I suppose I'm really one to talk there but after witnessing and not being able to stop so many resets it's hard to dredge up the appropriate response. My body count is far lower than yours on even one run though perhaps not on this run."

"My name is Frisk," Chara said. "My name is Chara."

Sans leaned back in his chair. "Is that right? That's quite the name to lay claim to."

"Everyone in the underground has died, whether they're aware of it or not. I've died quite a lot," Chara said. "I think you've probably died the least since you only seem to die once everyone else has and even then you don't always lose that fight."

"Lucky me."

"I died a long time ago. How long ago I couldn't tell you. Then I woke up. Or I was already awake. I was already Frisk. But, somehow, something about killing people seemed to bring it all back. I'm still Frisk but if I had to choose a name right now it would be Chara. If I ever get back home I may feel differently but right now we're in my stomping ground. Mine as Chara. And I barely saw any of it before I started to remember."

Sans was quiet for a moment. "You killed that many people that

quickly?"

"I would never claim to be a pacifist," Chara said. She tilted her head. "Even now when I technically never hurt anyone. At least I'm pretty sure. I didn't even touch Jerry, though I think that would have been okay, because I didn't want to risk it. And those monsters all attacked me. Even Toriel, I didn't really want to hurt then but she just wouldn't let me go and I couldn't stay trapped in the ruins forever. I didn't know what else to do. So yes."

"You're claiming to be some kind of reincarnation?"

Chara shrugged. "I couldn't tell you. I fell on top of my own grave, you know. Maybe I wasn't Chara before, maybe I was and simply didn't know. It was all sitting quietly until the violence started and honestly I'm not really sure how I feel about that. I honestly hadn't killed that many people before I died."

"That many? Chara, you were barely older than you were now when you first came to our world!"

"I've never been a fan of humanity," Chara said delicately. "Another thing to sort out, I suppose, with my loving human parents who would never dream of selling me."

Sans narrowed his eyes. "Selling-"

She held up a hand. "That really isn't what I came here to discuss. I told you about me and all the various things I'm trying to work through so you could understand the problem I'm having."

"You're having an existential crisis?" Sans asked. "Might I recommend not killing everyone?"

"You might," she replied. "But that's a rather self-serving request and not really something I think will help me."

"I don't know, I think not murdering everyone down here will help you a lot," Sans argued.

"I was killing everyone," Chara said distantly. "I didn't kill your brother today but I killed him yesterday. And I killed him the day before. And the day before that. And every day going back for weeks. I can get from the ruins to Asgore in a day so it's all that, all the time. Never any break. Even when I try to stay away, there's few enough places you can truly get away from it all."

Sans was unnaturally still. "I still haven't heard what this problem of yours you think I can help with is. Whatever it is that you think is somehow more important than your habitually committing genocide."

"Well, I haven't," Chara objected. "Oh, I come close but somehow there's always something. It's not so easy, you know. Do you know how many times after I remembered Toriel before I could bring myself to kill her? Or, God, Papyrus! He believes in me. He'd try to capture me if I hadn't done much but if I had he stood there, trying to hug me, and just having all this misplaced faith in me."

"That is Papyrus for you."

"Even when I would kill him, he'd still die \_believing in me\_," she said, disgusted. "What am I supposed to do with crap like that? I turned away from more attempts to kill everyone than you even know because of him. It took me a long time to bring myself to do it."

"Is that supposed to make me feel better?" Sans asked harshly. "Knowing that of the countless times you murdered my brother, who would never ever hurt you, you felt bad about it and sometimes couldn't go through with it?"

"Of course not," Chara said, surprised. "That wasn't about you. It was about me and the fact that I didn't just come back suddenly determined to kill everything in my path. I've never really felt bad about you, I must admit. You only fooled me with your fake mercy once."

Sans remained silent.

"I had finally done it. I had finally reached Asgore after having killed every other living thing in the underground. Everyone except Flowey, not that I had really had a chance if I wanted to. I would have had to face him before butâ€¦ Well, I reset a few times after facing you."

"Is this the part where I congratulate you on finally achieving the most evil actions imaginable?" Sans asked bitingly.

"Don't be common," she chided. "The point is, Flowey came to me. We talked. He talked. Did you know that I've never killed Asgore?"

"I'd say that was an accomplishment but apparently you've only met him once since you came back."

Chara shook her head. "It's not that. I've faced him several times. But I've never killed him. Flowey's killed him a few times and he's killed himself more than that. That is not a happy man."

"You of all people should know why."

"It doesn't matter. I'll probably make my way up there eventually," she said.

"Unless you really do reevaluate your life and your choices," Sans said mockingly.

"Reevaluation says nothing about what the outcome might be," Chara pointed out. "But yes. I've never killed Asgore. I haven't seen him as much as I've seen the others. There's really no hope for avoiding Toriel if I do anything."

Sans waited. "And?"

Her jaw worked. It seemed strangely difficult to get the words out. What was it? "Andâ€¦ Iâ€¦"

"It's just words."

She glared at him. "He thought I would kill him."

"Asgore? Well, with your reputation that's not surprising."

"He hadn't heard any of that," she said. "But I was talking about Flowey."

"It's still not surprising. You've killed everyone else."

"He thought I would kill him! He was telling me about everything, about how we had the same aims, then he decided I was going to kill him. He begged me not to kill him."

Sans was quiet, clearly trying to understand what the problem was. "Is that so strange? Many beg in the face of death and, with his ability to reset â€" an ability I take it you've supplanted? â€" he must not be used to facing real consequences for his actions. Not that you killing him need be more than you killing everyone."

She stared at him, almost wounded. "Do you really think I would kill him?"

"I have no reason to think you wouldn't," Sans said. "As you said, you've killed everyone. Everyone except Asgore but why waste your time if he'll just kill himself for you?"

"I haven't killed Flowey. I wouldn't kill him. Why did he think I would?"

"Probably because of your almost unbelievable body count," Sans said. "I don't get it. You kill everyone. You have to psych yourself up to kill Papyrus but you'll still do it. You don't seem to think killing Asgore eventually is out of the question. Yet with Flowey it isn't just a case of you haven't but you can't bear the idea?"

She smiled thinly. "Would it be trite to say even evil has its loved ones?"

"You won't stop killing your mother."

"That's different."

"How?" he challenged.

"It doesn't last. She doesn't remember. I'd hesitate more about killing you, for all you frustrate me, because you'd have some sense of it when you came back. The most I ever get from her is her feeling like she's seen me before."

"And how exactly does a soulless flower bent on destroying everything out of boredom merit more consideration than that? He has a better memory of your resets?"

"Well, yes, but I knew him before," she admitted.

"That flower hasn't been around that long," Sans said slowly. "And if he was anything before, he hasn't told me."

"He has a policy of not telling you anything," Chara said. "He has too much faith in your plan-foiling abilities."



"How sweet." He stretched out in his seat. "I'll be honest, if you're Chara and have only been back here for a few hours now and this is the first time you've been back since your death, I'm jumping to all kinds of conclusions right now."

"Well jump away," she invited. "I'm not usually sentimental."

"If his ashes spread over the garden, if the flowers came from the surface—I can't say I ever saw this coming. Prince Asriel, back as a homicidal flower who regularly murders his father."

"He doesn't have a soul," Chara said, feeling strangely like she was defending him and unsure why she was bothering. "And he knows it won't last, same as me."

"That would explain why you're conflicted," Sans said. "You'll kill your mother, you'll watch your father die again and again, but your brother can't even think you might kill him or you panic? I think I might actually understand and, let me tell you, feeling like I understand you is the last thing I want right now."

"The last thing? Really?" Chara asked, raising her eyebrows.

"Well, the last thing when I'm talking to someone who isn't a genocidal maniac," Sans amended.

"Maybe it doesn't make much sense," Chara mused, leaning back and staring at the ceiling. "I've been trying to find out what it was. I was very upset when I killed Toriel that first time. I hadn't even meant to. And when I remembered who I was and who she was to me it was even worse. But these things pass. Maybe it's that she has no idea who I am and \_he \_does. Maybe it's the fact that she doesn't remember and I know he will. Maybe it's the fact that she never sees it coming, no matter what I do, and he went from wondering if he could be happy just existing with me on the surface to fleeing for fear of his life in two minutes flat. And I didn't even \_say \_anything!"

"It is rather unsettling when you do that," Sans said.

"I never gave him any indication I wanted to kill him. And I know that he ruined things back then but the fact he thinks having done that is signing his own death warrant—I suppose I do tend to kill things when they get in my way. But he didn't mean to, he just—and it was so long ago. And he said he was my best friend. And for a moment he looked \_just like\_—" She broke off.

"I still don't quite see your dilemma."

She glared at him. "Then you're being deliberately obtuse."

"It's quite simple. Kill him, which you seem very much to not want to do, or don't. What did you do then?"

"I reset," she said. "So I know he remembers. I haven't seen him but he won't hide forever. He never did know how to stay away from me. And, no matter what's actually true with me, he'll convince himself sooner or later I was just joking or testing him or whatever."

"Your problem is that you go around committing genocide and don't

care who lives and who dies and then someone whose life you do actually value worried that he might not be exempt from your long-standing 'kill everyone' policy."

"It's not long-standing," she argued. "It depends, it really does. And you wouldn't understand. You didn't see it."

"No but I have an unnervingly good idea what Papyrus' dead body looks like," Sans said. "I have this image in my mind of him going in for a hug and a knife and his head sliding off."

Chara sighed. "I don't know what to do."

"You could not kill him," Sans said. "That seems like it's pretty obvious."

"But what about the fact he thinks I'll do it?"

"You already said he'll rationalize it to himself and sooner or later your lack of killing him will speak for itself anyway. You could even tell him that the fact he remembers is allowing you to see him as a real person whereas all these resets seem to have destroyed your ability to do that with everyone else."

"I don't know how it could be any other way," Chara protested. "Every time I meet you, you ask me to hide behind a lamp. Every time I meet you, your brother talks about joining the royal guard and how disappointed he is that you aren't helping him capture humans. Every time, which is every day, it's all the same exact thing. It's not his fault or your fault or anyone's fault except maybe mine for doing this over and over again. Put the same people in the same situations and they react the same. And I'm the same situation happening to people. When you know exactly what to say to get people to react in a certain way, it all begins to feel a little formulaic. It all starts to feel less real. They all start to feel a little less real. But Flowey remembers. And I've certainly never seen anything like that before. I-I don't want to see it again."

"Then change something," Sans said. "Why do you keep resetting to the point where nothing anyone does can surprise you?"

"I don't know," she said. "There's a lot I'm still trying to figure out. And even if I can convince him eventually, I don't want to hear him beg me for his life again. I don't want to see him scared of me. I caused his death once and it was the worst memory I have. And I think you know how I died."

Sans nodded. "I do. But I don't know how he did."

She looked away. "It doesn't matter. What am I supposed to do?"

"Let me answer that question with another," Sans said. "You know my interest in this. You can't really blame me, it is only my life and my world, but that doesn't mean it's not still valid. He thinks you will kill him because you kill everyone. As long as you keep doing that, I can't see anything changing. So tell me, Chara, why do you keep killing everyone?"

"I don't-"

"And don't give me 'I don't know'," Sans interrupted. "Maybe you don't fully understand your motives or some big overreaching reason behind your actions but what are you thinking when you come across Toriel or Papyrus or me or anyone else and decide to kill them day after day after day?"

"I'm thinkingâ€¦" Chara trailed off, trying to formulate an answer. These days she didn't have to think much, just briefly decide to do it and then follow through. "I'm thinking it doesn't matter. I'm thinking I'm not really killing anyone. I'm thinking what does it ultimately matter if their pain lasts a moment and then it never happened? No one really remembers. I could kill them a thousand times over and as long as I end it on a bright, shining ending they've got no cause to complain."

"You do it because you can. But why do it at all?"

"Would it veer too much into victim blaming if I said at first it was because I didn't have it in me to run away crying when they tried to kill me? When everyone said I must be sacrificed not because I was bad but because I was a human and they wanted to step over my corpse to escape? They're not even truly miserable down here, they just think it would be better on the surface!"

"I could see that. But there's a difference between killing in self-defense and hunting down everyone in the underground."

"There's a difference," she agreed. "And you're right I didn't have to do it again and again and again until it lost all meaning but at this point I did and I can't change that."

"And do you intend to leave everyone in a bright, shining ending once you're through?"

Chara shrugged. "I actually haven't really looked into it. What, am I expected to allow my own death to free them? This probably won't come as a shock but I'm not that good of a person and I don't feel I owe them a damn thing."

"Agree to disagree there," Sans said lightly. "But you're right, it is a difficult situation."

"In the meantimeâ€¦I'm going to actually have to talk to him, aren't I? But God even knows what I'd say. He said one of the reasons he liked me was my lack of useless pity. I can't see this going well."

"If it goes better than him thinking you would murder him, can you really complain?"

She just smiled at him. "Thank you. I'll try to leave Papyrus be for a few rounds."

Then she reset.

Still no Flowey.

So she reset again.

And again.

And again.

And again.

## 2. Chapter 2

Eventually, he did back to her. He didn't look afraid but that could mean any number of things. He could feel safe at this stage of the game. He could have convinced himself he had overreacted before. He could have just had time to hide his panic.

"What are you doing, Chara?"

"I wanted to talk to you," she said simply.

"And you thought constantly resetting the timeline was the best way to accomplish that?"

"Yes."

"Well, here I am," Flowey said. "What ever did you want to talk about?"

"I'm going to keep resetting the timeline until we finish this conversation," she warned.

He laughed. "Must be quite the conversation if you have to threaten me before we even have it! Sounds promising!"

"What would you have done if you'd known I was coming?" she asked.

He frowned. "What do you mean?"

"Not me in particular, just if you knew that you were going to lose the reset ability. If you knew you were on your very last reset and what you chose then would stick. How would you have arranged things?"

His eyes lit up. "Are you losing your power?"

"Not likely," she said. "But I can't do this forever."

"I never took you for a quitter," Flowey said, sounding almost disappointed in her. It wasn't quite fear but it was something.

"Who's quitting? I could probably do this for hundreds or thousands of years. I could do this until I went mad. God knows most people would think me mad already. And who's to say they're wrong? But forever isâ€¦|forever is infinite. Sooner or later the sun will explode. Not that that would matter if I take us back. But one day I'm going to have to stop and I'm going to have to choose how I leave this world."

"So it's advice you want?" Flowey asked. "You can't possibly have reset that much; I'd know. I'd say try something new but after a while there's nothing new because if it was new and it occurred to

you you already did it. That's the good thing about having you here, Chara. You're nice and new and I can't reset you to death. Each time you reset is something new for me. After you stop resetting and let the timeline progress, I imagine any outcome would be new. Unless you stay trapped down here with nothing but dust, I suppose. I wouldn't want to be alone with that."

"Do you know why I'm doing this?"

He laughed dryly. "I can imagine."

"I don't-I don't hate the people here. That may be surprising but I don't," she said slowly.

"What's to hate?" Flowey said, quite agreeably. "Just because you kill them doesn't mean it's hate."

"Do you hate them?"

He considered the question. "Sometimes. But it doesn't even matter, does it? If I'm going to do what I'm going to do, why bother with feelings?"

"Do you think I'm some sort of monster?"

He laughed again, no happier than before. "What a question to ask! Do I think you're a monster? You're in the kingdom of monsters, Chara. What is a monster? You're human, as much as you hate that fact. The humans use the word monster to talk about someone terrible but, well, they would, wouldn't they? You're a human who has done terrible things but you're asking the wrong flower if you're looking for condemnation there."

"Your father didn't recognize me as a human."

He flinched. "Ah. That."

"I told you I'd just reset," she warned, sensing his desire to leave. "Don't think I can't out-stubborn you. I'm the one with the reset power."

"I'd rather not waste my time," Flowey said. "What is there to say about that? He never was much of a judge of character."

"You thought I was going to kill you," Chara said bluntly.

Another flinch. "Weren't you?"

"I didn't, did I?"

"It's just one timeline. And I watched you have to work your way up to killing Papyrus. That stupid king hasn't once survived an encounter with you and you've yet to end his life yourself."

That was annoying. "His penchant for suicide is hardly my fault."

"Isn't it, though?" he countered.

Thatâ€|may not be inaccurate. But she wasn't interested in useless

guilt.

"Asriel."

"I'm not Asriel," he said flatly.

She smiled at that. She didn't know what else to do. "You can't have it both ways. You can't claim me as your best friend and talk about our pasts and how your parents failed you and then say you're not the person who is my best friend who did all those things and who is Toriel and Asgore's son."

"I can do anything I want to do," he said stiffly.

"You told me you were him. When you thought I was going to kill you," she clarified. "You looked just like you did then."

"I was trying to save my own life," Flowey said. "I told you that I'm not looking to find out what happens to a soulless creature upon death."

"And that I can't blame you for," she replied.

"Did it work?" he asked. "Obviously you didn't kill me, you just ran, but did it work, claiming to be him?"

"Of course it did," she admitted quietly. "I wasn't thinking of before but I honestly don't see how I could have looked at you then and gone through with it."

He nodded, absorbing that. "You should be careful before handing out such powerful weapons, Chara."

She smiled again. She was probably doing this all wrong but he had always been the only one who even came close to understanding her. "It's not a weapon, it's just true."

He gave her that unnerving grin of his that took up most of his face. "You should know better than that."

"And you should have known better than to think I would ever kill you."

"I should have known better than to think you would ever kill all the monsters who loved you," he countered. "You don't seem to be shedding any tears over the king and you've cut \_her \_down often enough."

"She's never blamed me," she said quietly. "No matter how many times I kill her, she always just begs me to be careful of Asgore and tells me to be good. She calls me her child. As far as she knows, she only just met me and may or may not have a feeling she's seen me before. If she were a lesser person I'd think she was trying to punish me for her death with emotional manipulation. It's like with Papyrus. It's easier if they hate you, if they blame you."

"I wouldn't know anything about \_that\_," Flowey claimed.

"And it's not the same anyway."

"Why? Because I'll remember?" he challenged. "Because I don't have to. In fact, I don't even know for sure you haven't killed me countless times and just done a true reset so I'd forget."

She drew back, strangely hurt. "Would I really be here talking to you about this if I had?"

"Chara, I don't know what you would and wouldn't do anymore," Flowey said honestly. "I can understand the appeal of consequence-free slaughter, I really can. But I never thought you would really die and I never thought you'd really try to start a war."

Something on her face must be wrong again because he started to shake again. Still, she had to say it. "And I wasn't wrong, was I? You didn't even do anything, you were just returning my body, and they killed you. Killed us. Humans will never understand. They won't even try to."

"Not just humans," Flowey said. "I know you're right. I know. It took me long enough to figure that out."

"Is that why you think I'm going to kill you?"

"I said you would kill whatever got in your way," Flowey said. "I've seen no reason to believe otherwise. Even when you don't waste time hunting down every little scurrying creature that runs away from you, you always kill the ones who try to kill you."

"After all the hell that Undyne put me through, she's lucky I don't reload just to keep killing her more often," Chara growled. "That thing with the spear as she chased me through Waterfall? When she kept me from fleeing if I wanted to? She signed her own damn death sentence. Every time."

"And all they did to inconvenience you was fight you."

"Yes, all they did was try to kill me, sometimes lecturing me on how selfish I am for not lying down and dying for their convenience," Chara said bitterly. "I want to kill her again."

"You'll have your chance, I'm sure," he said dryly. "They tried to kill you. They usually failed. And when they didn't it was barely a bother to reach for your SAVE. Whereas Iâ€¦"

"You?" She knew but she wanted to hear how he'd put it. Maybe it would help her understand.

"I knew what you intended to do. I told you I'd never doubt you. I told you I helped you. I gathered up the flowers, I watched you die in the worst agony I've ever seen. And I've experimented quite a bit with death, you know. And I took you to the surface, like I promised. And Iâ€¦"

She waited.

He took a deep breath and tried again. "I didn't let you do it. We came up there, you died, because we needed the six souls. And I wouldn't let you do it. You wouldn't have died at all if I hadn't agreed, if we weren't going to save them. And I wouldn't let you do it. I was weak and foolish. And then they attacked me. They didn't

even try to see what was going on. They just saw something they didn't understand and they murdered me. You were so right about them, Chara. Of course you were, you were the only one who knew them. And I still wouldn't do it. And I couldn't even keep my promise to leave you there. And I came back and I died and you died again and all of it was for nothing. My parents lost us both and everyone fell into despair and \_we're still trapped\_."

He seemed to be waiting for a reaction.

"Yes," she said.

He wilted. "I got you killed, Chara. I watched you die. I knew how horrible your death was. Then I failed you. Then I made your sacrifice worthless. No one has ever gotten in your way more than I have. And you kill those who get in your way. And I can promise I won't all I like. I can even mean it. But I meant it then, too, and I wasn't even a betrayer or a killer then. I even had a soul, then."

"You did betray me, when you ran to your father," Chara said. "I knew you had. It was obvious, even if he didn't understand. Killing himâ€|well if we want to talk about inconveniencing how was I ever supposed to get to the surface when you destroyed his soul? I killed everyone else."

Flowey drew back. "Oh."

"Not that it matters. Resetting is so simple and I'm in no hurry to figure this out. I had more pressing concerns anyway."

"So what are you saying? You expect me to betray and you aren't going to kill me?"

"Yes."

"I don't believe you," Flowey said.

She sighed. "I can't force you to."

"Even if you don't plan on killing me now, what's to say you won't plan on killing me later? These things get easier the more you do it."

"Killing the others is practically like killing automatons at this point, for all the variation. I would have to truly reset every time if I wanted that experience with you. Which I don't. And if you stayed out of the way until it was time to tell me the story of how I destroyed you, I don't think I would ever have the heart."

"What?" Flowey looked stunned. "How youâ€|how you destroyed me?"

"Well, yes," Chara said. "Have you really not considered it that way?"

His silence was answer enough.

"You're so focused on how you failed me that you forget that you were happy, Asriel."



"I'm not-"

"You were," she interrupted. "You and your parents. They won that stupid nose nuzzling competition a few years before I arrived. They were always embarrassing us with their affection. They wanted to be free, yes, but they understood why they weren't. Then I came. Then I made you all watch me die. And I thought 'This will hurt them but it will be worth it if I can save them.'"

"But you couldn't. Because of me," Flowey argued.

"But it was my plan. And I practically forced you to help me, don't pretend that I didn't," she said. "And I took you up to the surface even though I knew what humans were like. And I wouldn't even tell you why I hated them, I wouldn't even let you know what to expect. And I knew what a soft touch you were. It's only surprising how surprising I found what happened. I should have known you'd never do it."

"So now you're blaming yourself for my betrayal?" he asked skeptically.

"It's not even that, not really," Chara said. "People die. But I watched you die from the inside. I was there when your parents found you, when they realized what was happening. And it was all for nothing. They lost me, they lost you, and none of it mattered. And now there'sâ€|this," she waved vaguely at him, "and it wouldn't have happened without my plan. So how can I add to that? How can I finish the job and kill you again? Kill you when we don't even know what will happen?"

Flowey was quiet for a long time. "It's kill or be killed."

She smiled. "I've done quite a bit of both."

"Is it guilt, then? You didn't force me to do anything and I'm the one who failed in the end."

Guilt was a waste of time. "I just don't want to see you suffer more. I just refuse to be the one who makes you do it."

He laughed harshly. "And you think having you spare me again and again and again, watching you have perfectly friendly interactions with people, watching you hug my mother while she calls you her child doesn't do that? I couldn't even if I wanted to."

"Asriel-"

"Will you stop calling me that?"

"Why can't you stand to hear that name?" she asked. "It's just a name."

"If it was just a name you'd call me Flowey," he bit back.

"I'm sorry to say you inherited your father's naming abilities," Chara said. "Do you remember that joke we used to have about how your mother must have named you because combining your parents' names might not be original but your father probably would have just called

you Son?"

"Of course I remember," he said harshly. "What does it matter? I'm not Asriel."

"You may not have a soul and your body may be different but you have all the same memories and I think I'd know my own best friend. A friendship you keep laying claim to, too, might I remind you."

"So I'm a soulless talking flower with Asriel's memories," Flowey said.

"You've referred to your parents as your parents."

"Old habits die hard."

"Why won't you just be Asriel?" she asked again.

He gave her a looking just dripping with condescension. "Because I \_can't \_be. I'm not who I used to be."

"The person you used to be being Asriel?" she asked innocently.

He looked annoyed. "Yes, of course Asriel. But I'm not the same. There's nothing about me that's like him and don't pretend that that's not true."

"It's not true," she said. She didn't have to pretend. Much had changed, of course it had, but that was to be expected after what had happened. If he had lived through the human attack and still had his soul he probably would have still ended up a lot more like her than she had wanted.

"You're impossible."

"You think I haven't changed?" she demanded. "Would the me of before have ever been the kind of person to make you think you had to fear? Would I have ever killed all the monsters, even if I could always fix it? Or what about your parents? Would your mother have turned her back on everything and content herself condemning your father from a distance instead of trying to actually stop him? Would your father have had six dead children under his belt and looking to collect the seventh?"

"No one's changed as drastically as I have, Chara. Not even you," Flowey said stubbornly.

"So what? It's still you."

"And what if it is?" he demanded. "What do you think is going to happen? It's not like any of us can rewind time back that far. We can't stop ourselves from carrying out our plan or at least make sense we do it right. You can't make me believe I'm Asriel and I'll regrow a soul and stop being a flower. Even if you do care about me, you can't fix this. You can't even make me properly care about you."

Chara was fairly certain she had never given someone such an unimpressed look in her life.

"I don't! Not really. It's more nostalgia and idle wishing!" he insisted. "I hoped that my father could fix me and he couldn't. I thought my mother must be able to and she couldn't. You were the only chance I had and you can't, either."

"You never were a good liar."

"I'm not lying!" he spat out. "I can't feel positive emotions. I can't care about people!"

"You can't feel positive emotions, perhaps," she allowed. Though, really, how was she supposed to just accept that after seeing the way he looked at her from the moment he realized who she was right up until it occurred to him that he might be in danger, too? "But several people were grandfathered in there and if you couldn't feel anything for them â€" for us â€" it wouldn't hurt so much."

"Who said anything about it hurting?" he challenged.

"You've killed your father several times just in front of me," she said. "I can't imagine you haven't experimented with killing your mother, too. You didn't seem to care when I did, either. But tell me, after that first time when you revealed yourself to try and fix things, have you ever told them?"

Flowey looked away. "There wasn't any point. I'd already seen how they would react to me in this form and I have no interest in their worthless pity."

"That's only scenario, though," she pointed out. "You told me you did everything. And I've found plenty of delicious little differences in how I can kill the same person. When they see it coming, when they don't, when I let them think the fight is overâ€|Have you really never thought to tell them the truth before killing them, just to see what it would be like?"

"I might've," he said suddenly, viciously, "but you took away my toy before I was done playing with it. I have no interest in getting in your way while you merrily slaughter them."

"Your wish to stay out of my way certainly hasn't stopped you from repeatedly killing your father. And you didn't tell him who you were when you ran from me."

"I had other things on my mind," Flowey said. "And he's useless when you break his heart. You know he is. Simply failing to kill you is enough to push him to suicide."

She made a noncommittal noise.

"What are you even trying to do, Chara?" he demanded. "Convince me you won't kill me? You can't speak for forever. And what then, anyway? Nothing's going to change for me."

"You don't know that."

He laughed, loud and long and so full of defeat it hurt her very soul to hear. "Yes. I do."

There appeared to be nothing to say after that.

She stared at him for a minute more, wanting desperately to argue but not knowing what to say.

So she reset.

And he didn't show up that time.

But that was alright. She wouldn't know what to say if he did.

### 3. Chapter 3

There appeared only one thing to do. She was going to have to stop taking her frustrations out on people who had long-since stopped feeling like people to her. She was going to have to try something new.

So she did something she had never tried before.

She didn't kill people. Not anyone. Not even Jerry. Or Undyne. And it was hard. And she almost forgot herself so many times which is why she was creating so many new SAVE points so she wouldn't have to start over.

Sans looked so suspicious of her she was amazed he didn't say anything but he didn't confront her.

Then, just when she thought she might burst, she got a call. Something new. Undyne wanted her to deliver a love letter. Alphys (really, those two? Well okay then) seemed to think that Chara had sent it even though it likely just reeked of Undyne-isms and couldn't be opened by less than a chainsaw. Then Alphys agreed to go on a date with a child out of gratitude or apology or whatever. She was this close to just killing everyone involved but she had gotten that far and, though she couldn't quite see why putting up with this infantile date might help her help him, she didn't have any other ideas.

Then Papyrus sent her off to Alphys lab. She had seen the lab before. She had not seen this lab before.

It was terrible. Even for someone who had calmly killed as many as she had, it was terrible.

She had killed but she had never caused dying monsters to melt into each other and become horrifying and miserable freaks of nature. One had something like sixteen dogs all merged into one. One seemed just as desperate as Flowey. And speaking of, if she hadn't realized who he was before, those notes would have removed all doubts. A surprise for the king? Chosen the ideal subject? Were they actually trying to save Asriel in flower form or were they just intending to use her favorite flowers?

She didn't know.

She just knew that it was a good thing she saved because she murdered Dr. Alphys quite a few times for what she had done before she had calmed down and could continue with her nice, peaceful play through. No wonder she kept hearing about Alphys' disappearances in runs when

she made it to the end and there were still living creatures. There was some sort of sign that she hadn't worked on this alone but she didn't have the patience to waste time trying to solve that mystery. It didn't matter. Alphys' blood would have to be enough.

Then she came before Asgore again. She still hadn't seen Flowey. Was she supposed to try and spare him again and watch him kill himself in front of her?

She didn't have to find out. Toriel arrived.

Toriel.

She apologized for being late, saying she had to change her mind about coming. She insulted Asgore for his war and those dead children he was trying to build their salvation on. And she was there to save her. There was somethingâ€¦nice about that. Maybe she was always coming to save her, whenever she hadn't been murdered, and it was only that ridiculous waste of time with the date and then the lab that allowed her to reach Chara in time.

Then Papyrus showed up. And Sans. Undyne and Alphys although, really, who invited them? And it was all playing out like a happily ever after even though \_nothing\_ had been solved. Sans and Toriel finally 'met' even though it was clear Sans had known exactly who she was. It was no surprise he hadn't bothered introducing himself but had gone on and on about Papyrus.

And Chara wanted to scream. What good was this? What good was any of this? Asgore hadn't died, everyone else seemed ready to call it a day, but how was this helping her?

She was a heartbeat away from either killing everyone or resetting (maybe both) when Flowey made his appearance.

They had taken their eyes off the human souls. Of course. She had known he was after those. And maybe armed with those, and with the souls of all the monsters, he'd finally feel safe facing her down. She'd beaten him when he'd had all the souls before, when he was some sort of horrific creature she could hardly stand to look at, but this was different.

This wasâ€¦Asriel.

His back was to her.

"Finally," he said, sounding the way he always had. "I was so tired of being a flower."

"Asriel."

He turned around and smiled and it was such a vision of the past that her legs buckled and she fell to her knees.

"Howdy! Chara, it's me, your best friend," he said, as excited as he ever was.

There was a flash and as she climbed to her feet he was suddenly an adult. Suddenly who he might have been had life been kinder. Had \_she\_ been kinder. Or if she'd never darkened their doorsteps at all. He

was dressed just like his mother and, despite the fact he had absorbed her soul into him like everyone else's (did he even have a real plan?), that did not surprise her at all.

Neither did the fact that he tried to kill her. He'd done that before, of course, when he was that monstrosity. Just like before, he knew he couldn't make it stick. He may have had no problem killing her when he knew she'd remember even as she couldn't bring herself to do it to him. But then who was the real sentimentalist anyway? He'd called her Chara before she'd even really been Chara.

He'd already told her that he thought it might be enough, just living with her. Even as a flower. Now he told her how he was done trying to destroy the world. He just wanted to play this cat and mouse game with her forever. As if she would be able to bring herself to be so nice and non-homicidal over and over and over again if she had to deal with the frustration of him constantly killing her. Especially not when he looked like the monster he should have grown into by now, would have grown into by now if their paths had never crossed and she had just died in peace. She had barely managed it the first time and if she hadn't had that SAVE point in Alphys' true lab she wouldn't have been able to do it.

He wanted her to lose because he thought that would keep her coming back. He spoke of her love for her friends and, to some extent, that was true but it certainly didn't stop her from destroying them every other time she turned around. She probably wouldn't actually leave this world a wasteland but she hadn't been planning on leaving anytime soon. Did he really think he needed to manipulate her to stay?

There was no way she could withstand his attacks for long. They were big, they were powerful, and she was so weak right now with no LOVE and no EXP. So she did something that she honestly didn't believe would work and wasn't expecting anything out of except more mockery from him.

She cried out into the dark for help. And the boss monsters heard her. All she had to do was joke with them or encourage them or hug them and they came right back to themselves.

Then, though it was even more hopeless, she reached out to Asriel himself, remembering that very first time they had met. The time he had saved her. The time he had begun to sow the seeds of his own destruction.

He got more hostile when he realized what she was doing but that was expected. What wasn't was the way he started speaking then.

He told her why he was doing this, the real answer this time. That she was special and he cared about her and he couldn't lose her again. And when he begged her to just let him win because he wasn't ready to say goodbye to someone like her againâ€¦|

It was shameful but she almost did it. The look on his faceâ€¦|she had never seen someone so pained. And she had watched him and his parents watch her die. She had watched his parents watch him die.

But that wouldn't change anything. And maybe this wouldn't, either, but nothing said she could reset after seeing this one through.

The fact that she still felt that way even though while he was saying this he was unleashing a terrifying rainbow attack that pushed her farther than she'd ever been pushed before really said something about how much he meant to her.

He was so alone, he said. He was so afraid. He kept using her name.

There was another flash and the Asriel she remembered was back. And he was crying.

"I'm so sorry," he said. He saw the look on her face and managed to smile despite his tears. "I always was a crybaby, wasn't I, Chara?"

"I'm, uh, beginning to suspect I might have overused that word," she admitted. "You did cry a lot but it was usually when I was doing things like nearly killing your dad or plotting my own suicide and making you a part of it or when I couldn't understand why you were being nice to me. I-I may understand a bit more how you were feeling."

He nodded and she could tell they were both thinking about when she had spared him after their fights. Some of it might have been an act to get her to the point he could absorb everyone but enough of it had been real. He really couldn't understand. Just like she hadn't been able to.

"What have I done?" he asked her softly.

"No worse than I have," she said, just as softly. "In fact, probably not as bad as I have."

"I killed you. You wouldn't kill me and I killed you."

"Your mother managed to kill me once," she said.

"What, really?" he asked, surprised. "I thought she made her attacks miss you on purpose if you got too close to death."

"A fact I figured out on my second try," she said simply. "I could tell she felt horrible about it and she hadn't meant to kill me to convince me it was too dangerous to leave. I'm glad I was able to reset that for her. She's so much less horrified when you kill her."

"How could I have done that, though, Chara? How could I have killed everyone?" he asked, hugging himself. "My own father! And my mother, though not as often. How could I have killed them? How could I not have cared?"

"It's not your fault," Chara said, beginning to feel the stirrings of something that might be guilt. For better or for worse, she cared about Asriel's opinion. He wasn't judging her but he was condemning himself for the very same actions and she didn't even have the fact that she was looking for an escape and was a soulless creature incapable of doing much of anything or feeling positive emotions to explain what she had done. And it wasn't even what she had done so much but Asriel's reaction to it that was bothering her now. Monster

souls were made up of love, mercy, and compassion and here she was with a perfectly good soul not exhibiting any. She really was right to hate humans, wasn't she?

"How is it not my fault? I did it and I didn't even care. I was-I was curious. I told myself I didn't want to but I knew it was a lie. And after I satisfied my curiosity I kept doing it again and again and again!"

"You didn't have a soul," Chara insisted. "You weren't capable of feeling love and compassion and mercy and even then you tried your hardest to fix that! Even then your first instinct was to help people out and make their lives better! And it was only when you kept trying and couldn't change anything, couldn't save yourself, learned the situations so well it all stopped feeling real, that you started killing."

"And it's supposed to make it alright because I didn't immediately jump to bloody murder?" Asriel demanded.

"It didn't take me long to start killing. Killing woke me up, I think," Chara replied. "And I have a soul. And I could have just killed one and went home. My position was far better than yours and I'm not missing a piece and I still did it."

Asriel's face crumpled. "Chara-"

"Oh, don't. It's no shock, you being a better person than me."

"Can you ever forgive me?"

"For what?" Chara asked.

"I'm going to cry again," he warned her.

"I suppose forgiveness from your best friend, even if it's completely unnecessary, is another one of those things it's not silly to cry over," Chara said, feeling almost magnanimous.

"Unnecessary? Chara, how many times did I kill you?" he asked.

"Iâ€|don't actually remember," Chara said. "But it doesn't matter. And as for the rest, Sans is the only one who would have any idea. And he would never do anything to hurt Toriel so you don't have to worry there."

His eyes widened. "Charaâ€|you can't tell them."

"Tell them what?"

"Mom and Dad. Anyone. You can't tell them about me."

"Why wouldn't I tell them that you're alive?" she demanded. "There is literally nothing in this world that would make them happier! And yes, that is true despite how many people you've killed although, really, it's probably best not to share too many details. Might confuse the issue. And no one except Papyrus, who never would, gets to pull the moral high ground argument with me."



"But this isn't going to last, Chara. You have no idea how much I wish that it could. But it can't. I want to go with you, I want to go with them, I want to be a family again. But I just \_can't\_."

"Why \_not\_?" she asked, getting frustrated. "If this is about misplaced guilt-"

"It's not," he said. "Though it wouldn't be misplaced if it was."

"Then what is it about?"

"I don't have a soul. I'm a flower."

"You seem to be doing fine to me," she offered.

He actually rolled his eyes at her. "That's because I have six human souls and enough monster souls to make up a seventh inside of me right now."

Right. That.

"And you know I can't keep them."

"Do I, though? I mean, you might want to put the monster souls back but it's not like the human souls were doing anything anyway. Just hang on to at least one of them until you die. It'll be fine."

"I couldn't," he said. "They deserve to be at peace."

"I mean, you keep saying that but, really, do they?"

He gave her a look. "Yes."

"You know, it's that kind of thinking that got us into this mess in the first place."

He actually smiled at that. "Perhaps. But I think I'm coming around on that actually, Chara. All this time I blamed myself for what happened. All this time I thought I should have listened to you. Kill or be killed. But you know there would have just been a war if we came back like that. You know what happened in the last war."

"We're really a lot less magical these days," Chara said. "It's all the technology, I think. They couldn't erect another barrier."

"They have bombs now," Asriel countered. "I did the right thing, Chara, protecting those humans."

"Those \_murderers\_, you mean."

"They didn't know. They just saw a monster with a dead child. What other conclusions could they have drawn?"

"They could have at least asked," she argued.

"Did they even know I could speak? Would they have believed my denials? Why would I tell a heavily armed mob about my child murder?" Asriel asked reasonably. "I did the right thing. Maybe it wasn't the best thing I could have done but it was far from the worst. And now

it's led us here."

"Is here such a great place to be?" Chara asked. "You won't \_listen\_."

"There's nothing to listen to," Asriel said. "And don't you dare reset, Chara. This is enough."

"It would be," Chara said. "If you'd just-"

"But I won't. And no matter how many times you try, you can't change that. Having a human soul, coming back to myself like thisâ€¦It's not worth it. I can't keep these souls."

"Soâ€¦what? You go back to being a flower?"

A flash of terror crossed his face then before he nodded bravely. "I go back to being a flower. And one day, perhaps one day soon, I'll find out what happens to soulless flowers when they die. O-or I won't, which is really the same thing."

Her heart went out to him. "Asriel."

"But we will have our happy ending after all," he soldiered on. "We will finish what we started."

She blinked. "You mean-"

"Wouldn't you know that every soul in the underground just about amounts to one human soul?" he asked rhetorically. "Wouldn't you know that I can finally finish what I started and make all of this worth it? I can finally free my people."

"It's not worth you," she said. "It never was."

He smiled sadly. "I appreciate that but it's a little late to change things now. We can't go back to before and I-I'm not sure I even would. I can't afford to be selfish here. My people need this. They need hope. Two thousand years, Chara. And my father was there then. How can I do otherwise?"

"They wouldn't want this." If nothing else, she was sure of that. "\_I \_don't want this."

Another sad smile. "I know. But it's the right thing to do."

"You and your ethics," she grumbled.

"It feels good to have ethics again," he said.

"It's not selfish to want a chance to live your own life," she said. "You deserve that. You deserve to \_exist\_ more than they deserve to go to the surface."

"Maybe it's not about deserve," Asriel conceded. "But I hurt so many people."

"And then it's all undone."

"I literally have everyone's souls inside me right now."

"You're going to give them back," she replied.

"I want to do this. Please, just let me do this."

Was she crying?

He seemed to take her silence as agreement and he raised his arms, the souls became visible, and the barrier shattered.

"I have to go now," Asriel said. "It would be better not to have to answer any awkward questions. You know my parents will be happier thinking I just stayed dead than knowing all that I've done. Than knowing that they can't save me and how much I hate it. And once I go back, I can't promise that I won't ever come after them again. Oh, at first I'll probably be fine. At first the memories will be fresh. At first I was fine then, too. But they can't trust me. Not even you can trust me, Chara. I know I don't."

Instead of answering, she simply walked over and gave him a hug.

She didn't know how long they stood like that, each trying to pretend like this wasn't happening, like things could go back to the way they were before. The way they were before they'd ended up saving the kingdom and losing themselves.

Eventually, he pulled away. "Take care of my parents for me, will you? It will—it will be enough, for them, knowing you're back."

"Asriel," she said. "Don't go."

"Don't reset, Chara. I don't think I could go through this again. And this is the best ending you're ever going to get."

She couldn't see. She blinked a few times, trying to clear the tears out of her eyes, and then she was lying on the ground, once again listening to her panicked parents trying to wake her. And the others were there, too.

No one understood what happened. They remembered Flowey showing up but that was it. They knew the barrier had broken. They had questions but she didn't know what to say.

They suggested she take a walk and go see all her friends before going to the surface. She couldn't care less about doing that.

She hadn't felt this numb in a long time. She wanted to reset. She almost did. But he'd asked her not to and surely she could honor his wishes for five goddamn minutes. It was all he'd asked, other than to keep his identity hidden. And he'd given everything for them, more than once, and they'd never know.

She thought she might know where to find him.

He never did stray too far from her grave.

Pasting on her best smile, she wove in and out of the revelers and their congratulations and tried to pretend like she didn't want to just murder all of them. It would make Asriel's sacrifice worthless

if she did.

"Chara," he said when he heard her approach. He turned around. "I told you not to worry about me. And someone has to take care of the flowers, right?"

"My grave is fine," she said. "Don't abandon me to hang out with my decomposed body."

He sighed. "It's not that simple. I already explained this to you."

She shrugged. "So you turn back into Flowey. What difference does that make?"

He gave her an incredulous look. "What dif-Chara, you know \_exactly\_ \_what difference that will make. And if you see me like that, I need you to not think of that as me."

"I don't think I can do that," she admitted. "I get why, I do, but I can't."

"I'm just going to take advantage of that," he warned.

"I'm planning on creating SAVE points regularly. I can fix anything I have to," she replied.

"Charaâ€¦"

"Oh, don't Chara me like I'm being unreasonable!" she said. "You're my best friend. You died for me and now you're sacrificing yourself for them andâ€¦what? You just want to be left alone done here, abandoned, as everyone else goes to live it up on the surface?"

He closed his eyes. " 'Want' might be putting it a bit strongly but you know it's for the best."

"I know nothing of the sort!"

"You would if you were being honest with yourself," he told her. "Please, just go be with the people who love you."

"I am," she said.

"Chara-"

"\_I am\_," she insisted. "All those people, they may love quickly but they technically met me today. All but Sans who sort of remembers me and doesn't have the best memories of my homicidal strolls through this place or of the constant resets. Your parents don't know who I really am and even if they did â€" even when they do â€" they couldn't love me half as much as you do. So you're running out of time. I've got nowhere to be. The surface can wait."

He managed a small smile. "You're going to keep me company until the end."

"At least that long," she agreed.

"At least?" he asked, puzzled. "Chara, don't do anything stupid."

"I never do \_anything \_stupid," she lied.

Asriel didn't even bother to dignify that with a response.

"You don't want your parents knowing who you are, fine. You don't want to hurt anybody, okay. I'll make that work. But if you think for one second that I'm just going to go off and basically steal your life after pretty much causing this then you've got another thing coming!"

"Chara, you didn't!" Asriel protested.

"You're not going to win this argument," Chara said. "I'm a lot better at the self-blame than you are. And all of it was my idea in the first place. Since you insist you did the right thing with those humans, you've got a lot less ammunition. Plus, regardless of what you think, no soul is a really great mitigating factor."

He made a face. "I don't need to hear that right before I turn back into a soulless creature. I won't need the encouragement."

"I'll remember you don't want to hurt anyone, not really," she promised. "No matter what you say."

"No matter what \_Flowey \_says," Asriel corrected.

"Your identity issues are going to give me a headache," she complained.

"I'm surprised you don't have any yourself," he said. "What with being two people and all."

"What's to have issues about?" she asked. "I'm me and I'm me. I didn't hate humanity before remembering which may get a little complicated but I need to not ruin this for everyone since you're being so stupid about this whole thing."

He smiled. "Thank you for that."

"Hmph."

"What do you intend to do, then?" Asriel asked seriously. "Spend the rest of your life down here as well? You know no one will let you. And my parents deserve to have at least one child back."

"You know, with the right application of resets we can probably figure out a way to get them back together," Chara said casually. "I could just be being paranoid but I don't trust Sans around your mom after they became bad joke buddies. He even refused to kill me because she asked him to even though he knew what I could do. What I've been doing. Even after he knew I killed her. Even after he knew I killed his brother. Not until I killed everyone else."

"I don't know, Chara. Don't you think we should let them make their own decisions?" Asriel asked uncertainly.

Chara stared at him. "What about me has ever suggested to you that I believe in letting other people make their own decisions?"

"Thatâ€¦is kind of true, actuallyâ€¦"

"Of course it is. My plan is simple. I honor your request to let you stay down here for as long as you can, if only because there's no way we could make it up to the surface without everyone in this whole kingdom seeing you, especially since everyone's waiting for me before going to the surface. And, I'm not going to lie, I hope I'm going to have a really long wait."

He hugged himself again and she put her hand on his arm. "So do I. But I don't think so."

"And then, when it happens, I'm going to take you with me. You're going to come live with us and you might be mean or try to kill people but we can all take care of ourselves and I have the SAVE and human souls aren't up for grabs anymore," she said. "And it will be as good as we can make it. And we're going to talk to Dr. Alphys. She knows how to keep a secret, if nothing else, and she made this mess so she can damn well help us fix it."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

She shrugged. "Am I a scientist? She figured out how to bring you back and do all kinds of other weird stuff and I can always reset if she makes you melt or something. Maybe she can figure out how to create a soul or something. Giving a robot a soul, even if that turned out to be a bunch of crap, was apparently plausible enough to convince everyone when she created Mettaton. And even if she can't, we're no worse off than we were before. I mean, I'm not saying it's ideal but it's clearly the best choice we have."

"Chara."

"It's happening, Asriel. Deal with it."

"It will just complicate things. It will just cloud your happy ending."

"Don't you get it? There is no happy ending. Not for me. Not without you. And you're the one who made all this possible! Your father was never going to use my soul to break the barrier. I was never going to stay dead and let him. Even if they do find out, they can't hold a grudge when you're the one who set them free. Really properly free, not free like I've been using that term to mean I'm going to kill everyone. And your parents deserve to have you back, even if they don't know it. And you're the big hero here. You deserve to be remembered and to have the happiest ending you can. And don't you even tell me being trapped down here would be it for you."

"You really shouldn't," he protested again but it was half-hearted at best. He knew this was the most he was going to get out of her and he really couldn't stop her once he became a flower again. "You should just leave well enough alone."

"Why is it that no one ever says that unless things \_aren't \_well enough?" Chara asked rhetorically. "Because they're not. And if I were the kind of person to leave well enough alone, we never would have even met. The first time or more recently. And even if we had somehow, I never would have found those flowers or kept resetting

past getting my hand on a soul and heading to the surface."

"I've been meaning to ask you," Asriel said. "Why were you climbing the mountain this time, Chara? Last time it wasn't for a very happy reason but things seemâ€|betterâ€|for you this time."

She laughed. "Would you believe Timothy Jones bet me I couldn't?"

"Who's Timothy Jones?"

"Some guy," she said dismissively. She reconsidered. He had brought her home. "Best damn guy I know."

Asriel laughed.

"I can't live with them, you know. If they're even willing to live together which I suspect they won't be just yet," Chara said. "I want to. I really do. I'd so much rather live with them than my parents but, well, I don't think anyone would be understanding. I think you'd rather stay with me and come visit as often as we can than stay with either of your parents if you're going to be hiding who you are but if I'm wrong we can do that, too."

"You're planning out our whole lives," he said fondly.

"No, just the immediate future. I think I'd like to not know what's coming for a while, wouldn't you?"

He smiled. "As a matter of fact, I would."

"So that's settled. Just you and me and the creepy grave of mine and the flowers and then just you and me and the monsters and the surface. Then you and me and the parent trap and Dr. Alphys and maybe Sans depending how helpful he feels like being. Just as long as it's you and me, really. I'm game for anything."

"Do I have a choice?" Asriel asked.

"That doesn't sound like an argument."

"No, I suppose it doesn't," he said. "Did you ever think we'd end up here, back when we first met?"

She gave him a look. "No."

He laughed. "Neither did I, really. But I thinkâ€|and this may change, especially once I turn back butâ€|I don't think I regret a thing."

"I do," she said. "But just the one. Most people would say I should regret more but, really, they're just lucky I've decided to stop killing everything that looks at me."

"They are," he agreed. "But hopefully there will be less people trying to kill you on the surface."

"There certainly can't be more."

"Chara," he said seriously, reaching out and grabbing her

hand.

"Yeah?"

"Thank you. For everything. I'm really glad that I met you."

And she smiled and her heart broke and she was waiting for the worst possible thing and she thought that maybe, just maybe, this was what it felt like to finally grow up.

End  
file.